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THE FRENCH POPULATION.

Journal de la Société de Statistique de Paris. September, 1892. *La population française.* Par M. Levasseur.

The population of France is nearly stationary, yet almost every census since 1800 has shown an absolute increase in the number of people. The only exceptions to this rule have been the year 1853-54, when both war and the cholera united to check the natural growth; 1870, again, was a time of war, and in 1890 (probably also in 1892) there was a negative result shown by the enumeration. The naturally slow growth has been accentuated during the last fifteen years, so that today all of the problems presented by a stationary population are especially pressing and urgent. One of the most important of these is that of the relative increase of wealth and population, and in this regard France is especially fortunate, comparing favorably with the rest of Europe. The political problem now is concerned rather with the absolute increase in numbers. France possessed 21 per cent of the population of the five great European powers in 1816, while in 1890 she constituted only 13 per cent of the aggregate population of the six most important nations. This the author considers the burning question of the time for all patriotic Frenchmen, as in the present armed state of Europe it may affect the autonomy or independence of the nation.

From 1801 to 1810 the rate of mortality was 28.2 per 1000; from 1881-88 it fell to 22.2; whereas, the average for Europe is now 28, and of twenty-nine states there are but nine which have a lower rate than France. In reality the improvement in general vitality is not as great as the figures indicate, for it is the birth rate which has decreased the most, which in itself means a larger proportion of adults, and consequently a lower death rate, irrespective of all other considerations. Nevertheless, there has been considerable improvement due to greater civilization, spite of this necessary correction. The marriage rate from 1881 to 1888, 7.4 per 1000, is somewhat below the average for Europe (8.4 per 1000 from 1865 to 1883). It has fallen since 1880, partially as a result of the great mortality in the wars of 1870, among men who would still be within the ages of probable marriage,

especially among the thrifty peasantry. Yet, since the same results are observed in other states not depopulated by war, it is more likely due to longer army service for men of a marriageable age.

The great weakness of France is the low birth rate. This has fallen during this century from 32.2 per 1000, in 1801-10, to 24 in 1881-88, although the decrease has been less rapid since 1850. With a rate of 25 per 1000 in 1865-83, France stood last among European nations, the average of which was 38.5. Its marriage rate was more normal, as France stood 18th in a total of 29 nations. Since 1886 the number of births has fallen below 900,000, and, owing to the epidemic of influenza in 1890, was even less than the number of deaths. This feeble birth rate is largely responsible for the low death rate, of course, and it is merely an exaggeration of a phenomena common to all the states of Europe. Since 1872 its population, considering the excess of births over deaths, has gained on the average but 3.4 per 1000 yearly, while that of Europe has grown at the rate of 11 per 1000, and the German Empire at a rate of 11.6 per 1000. The annual surplus for the last ten years has not been above 2.9 per 1000 as in 1881, and the average has been but 1.7, so that the least disturbance of normal conditions may change it into a deficit, as in 1890. Illegitimacy is not very great, being but 7.5 per 1000 births, though it has risen in single years to 8. This is rather from a decrease in legitimate births, however, than from increase in the absolute number of illegitimate ones.

The low birth rate and the rapid increase of wealth offer great inducements to immigration; and the population of France includes a larger proportion of foreigners than any other great European power. The same reasons conspire to prevent excessive emigration, the number being only 20,000 to 30,000 a year. Within the nation there is a great immigration of the rural population into the cities. This movement is really less marked than in the United States, but the general increase of population there is so slow that it does not counterbalance the decrease in the country districts. As a result, 41 departments had a smaller population in 1886 than in 1846, and the last two censuses (1886 and 1891) show a positive decrease in 51 departments against an increase in but 32. This is brought out in a succeeding article by M. Leon Roquet.

The distinguished author is of the opinion that it is useless to look

for any change in these various tendencies at present; they are, indeed, more likely to become accentuated. The hope of France for the future is in hygienic regulations, morality, and education, which will tend to reduce the rate of mortality, that thereby the present deficit may become converted into a surplus.

Journal des Economistes. October, 1892. *La population française le dénombrement.* M. Leon Roquet.

This sketch deals with a tendency toward the concentration of population in large cities, which we have noted above in the statistics of M. Levasseur, but it brings the figures down to a later date, including the results of the census of 1891. In France there are 56 cities having over 30,000 inhabitants, among which 9 show an absolute decline in population since the last census. Nantes, Saint Nazaire, Calais, and Boulogne are among this number; Dunkirk shows a considerable falling off due to the tariff legislation. The 47 other cities show a total increase of 372,074 inhabitants, which is not due to excess of births over deaths, but to immigration from the rural communes. Indeed, the total increase of population shown by the last two censuses has been but 124,289. Paris alone has gained 103,407, which is more than the total population of some of the departments. The suburbs of Paris have absorbed many of the emigrants from the country; the department of the Seine, for instance, shows in four years and a half an increase of 180,000, a rate of increase exceeding 3000 per month.

The other principal cities have increased by the following amounts: Lyons, 36,147; Marseilles, 27,606; Bordeaux, 11,833; Montpellier, 12,493; Saint Etienne, 15,588; Nice, 10,795; Roubaux, 14,618; Lille, 12,939. The result of these various concentrations of population, exclusive of Paris, is that these lesser cities have drawn to themselves more than twice the total increase of the population of France since the last census. The great cities not only absorb the entire increase of population, but three or four times that number, so that the rural communes are being actually depopulated, as M. Levasseur has demonstrated in his great study of the subject.

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